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ADDRESS  
TO  
THE RULERS  
OF THIS  
NATION,  
AND  
ALL THOSE IN POWER.

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“**F**EAR God, and give glory to him, for the hour of his judgment is come.” The Rev. xiv. 7. awful import of this Divine injunction is fully applicable in a national capacity. It is righteousness only that can exalt a na- Prov. xiv. 34. tion, raise it in the Divine estimation, and draw down upon it the blessing of the Lord. I cannot but believe that this awful language must have frequently arrested the attention of the more serious amongst you, and the nation in general; and in a particular manner of later times. It must be obvious, that in this day in which we live, the judgments of the Lord are in the earth; and because of these things it may be said, men’s hearts are ready to faint within them. But as the true fear of God predominates in our minds, it delivers from that fear which must probably, at times, more or less, assail the minds of all those who are not willing to have God in all

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their thoughts; namely, the fear of what man may do unto them. And thereby it is that we are enabled to give glory to God, by bringing forth fruits of righteousness. A Christian's dependance should be firmly fixed on Him who is all-powerful, and who can cause dismay to overtake the most intrepid. He has various and secret means to overturn all the purposes of those who have respect only to the obtaining their own ambitious ends. But before we can experience this confidence, as a nation, a previous step must be taken: we must cease to do evil. "Put away," saith the Lord, "the evil of your doings from before mine eyes: cease to do evil." May we, individually, be concerned; and, in an especial manner, you in whom the power is so much vested, to endeavour that the causes of evil may be removed, that so the baneful effects may more and more cease. This is that which will find acceptance with God, and is the fast which he hath chosen, "to loose the bands of wickedness;" or, in other words, that ye exert yourselves, labouring under that Divine aid which awaits every sincere seeking soul in the prosecution of its duty. By these means

Isaiah i. 16

Isaiah lvii. 6



means you may be made a blessing to this nation; and, possibly, a means of our preservation from long-threatened calamities. Much rests with you, towards checking the torrent of evil. No longer wink thereat; for, whether we are active in the evil ourselves, or acquiesce, by not timely, and in good earnest, exerting ourselves to suppress it, we make ourselves parties to the guilt, and may stand accused in the sight of God. O that, by increasingly following after righteousness, ye may become instrumental to promote the design of Heaven, in suffering judgment so awfully to overspread the earth! For, if we are favoured still to procure for our Friend, Him who yet remains to be “mightier than the noise of many waters; yea, than the mighty waves of the sea;” and can availingly say unto the greatest potentate that ever trod this globe, hitherto thou shalt go and no further, what have we to fear, or of what need we be afraid? “If we are followers of that which is good,” followers after righteousness, purity, and holiness, and concerned to be found persevering therein, “what shall ever be able to harm us,” either as a nation or individually?

Psal xciii. 4.

1 Pet. iii. 13

If the Lord continue to be on our side, and plead our cause for us with our enemies, no weapon formed against us can eventually prosper. But if we continue to persist, as a nation, not to take warning at others' harms; are not concerned, in good earnest, to seek to God for help, each one to do our part towards having the causes of the evil removed; what may we not expect will be the consequences thereof? May you be found the leaders in this work of reformation! you in whom the executive power is vested. If it prosper in your hands, the complaint that some of the law-makers, and some of those who are entrusted to enforce them, are violators of them, will then cease. Many of you are instrumental in inflicting the punishment which the law allots to crimes. And who art thou, O man! that art saying to another,

Exod. xx. 15. "Thou shalt not steal:" for if thou art covetous; living in adultery; wantonly wasting the good things of God; openly and profanely swearing, and taking the name of the Lord in vain; art thou not equally guilty before him? If thou thinkest otherwise, thou mayst be deceiving thyself. God cannot be deceived. He is not like poor,  
frail

frail man. How can laws, if they are ever so well framed, prosper in the things they are designed for, except they are enforced by example on the part of those who give them forth, and are entrusted with their execution. Oh that I had words to enforce these things equal to the concern that I feel! from a firm belief that they would do more for us, as a nation; more effectually secure us from the calamities to which other nations, of late years, have been witness of, than all your contrivances for defending the nation; all your exertions used to increase the number of watch-towers, or any other means of defence. And I am firmly persuaded, that every one who is preserved in the faith of one God over all, good unto all, will, at times, feel in himself, the force of this sacred truth, that, "except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." Ps. cxxvii. 1,

The dreadful calamities that have been felt by other nations, we well know, have not been confined to the poor and middle classes of life; for neither royalty, dignity, nor property, have been any protection. Kings have been dethroned, distinctions  
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levelled,

levelled, property distributed and destroyed, without the means, on the part of the sufferers, to help themselves. No doubt, as these things have reached the ears of many in this nation, astonishment has filled the heart; and this conclusion has frequently been the result of such information, that the instrument of these turnings and overturnings in nations and kingdoms, has been suffered to be a scourge, by Him who cannot err. We must not conclude, that, because we have hitherto escaped drinking the bitter cup which other nations have had to drink of, that they were sinners above ourselves. No; for except we are found timely bringing forth fruits of repentance, we may be sharers in such sufferings; and should Almighty God see meet to suffer an overflowing scourge to enter our borders, where shall we be able to shelter ourselves with safety. It must be acknowledged that we are a nation highly favoured of God; but that there is also cause for us to smite our hands upon our breast, and acknowledge we are a sinful nation. Yet, notwithstanding this, I have been led, at times, humbly to hope, we are not amongst the last in the Divine estimation,



tion. I desire to be preserved from presuming or flattering; and yet, (notwithstanding the afflictive consideration of the slaughter of so many thousands of our countrymen, during the present war, and the sufferings of the widows and fatherless, the consequences thereof,) I cannot help querying, What nation excels this in humanity? A virtue, and a precious virtue it is, and in which, I believe, we have, as a nation, of late been increasing. In what has it more conspicuously manifested itself, than by the successful exertions used to abolish that iniquitous traffick in human blood, the slave trade? When the favoured event, (for so I considered it,) reached mine ear, my very heart seemed to leap within me for joy. It felt to me like moving from off the shoulders of this nation a great load of iniquity; and, at times, I am led humbly to hope it was a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling favour unto God. By what nation also are we excelled in liberality and acts of benevolence? arising, I doubt not, in the general way, from a pure motive; a desire to alleviate the sufferings of those in distress. Oh, may we not stop here, my dear countrymen of every description, but  
 may

may we, in good earnest, become concerned, as with one accord, to put shoulder to shoulder in this work, that in an individual and national capacity we may excel in every other Christian virtue. O that the great and good work, which I cannot doubt is begun in the minds of some of those who stand foremost in national concerns, may not be retarded by any temporal consideration of consequences: that so they may, by their faithfulness, lead on others therein. So, by our example as a nation, we may become instrumental, through Divine aid, to further the coming of that glorious gospel day, when “nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more:” and cause the language yet to arise in the hearts of neighbouring nations, “Happy is that people whose God is the Lord.” So his praise, through our faithfulness, may yet spread as “from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.” Neither have I been dismayed when endeavouring to view how matters stand with us, as a nation, as to religion. My mind has not been able to believe we are behind-hand with other nations in religion—(true religion.)

Isaiah ii. 4.

Ps. cxiv. 15.

Zech. ix. 10.

religion.) Although we are divided and subdivided into so many denominations, each one, more or less, differing from another, as to the mode of worshipping the Creator; yet, all being firmly persuaded in their own minds in this respect, and acting in all things consistent, doing their duty in all things faithfully and uprightly in the presence of God, whether vocally or mentally engaged to seek the continuance of his help, such are accepted of Him. That there are of this blessed number amongst the different professors of the Christian name in this land, I doubt not; and yet, as a nation collectively, the language to a church formerly is but too applicable to us: “I Rev. iii. 2. have not found thy works perfect before God.” Oh may we feel a lively concern that we may profit by the command which succeeded this reproof: “Remember, there- Rev. iii. 3. fore, how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast and repent.” If this be not the case, let us bear in mind what may follow: “if, therefore, thou shalt not watch, I will Rev. iii. 3. come upon thee as a thief; and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.” May it not be said, O England! England! thy salt hath hitherto preserved thee,

thee, and not thy long-boasted fleets and armies; for had it not been for the sake of the few righteous, under various names, that are yet to be found in thee; and had not the Lord continued to be unto thee for walls, and for bulwarks, around thy borders, might not thou have been as Sodom, and like unto Gomorrah, long ago.

Is it not a proof that degeneracy and irreligion are increasing in this land? that the day set apart for religious purposes should be made, by so many, a day of the greatest dissipation, extravagance, riot, and drunkenness; and that even what are called the higher ranks, are bad examples to the lower order in this respect. And it appears to me, that some of the causes contributing thereto are the needless increase and great abuse of houses of public entertainment, stage coaches unnecessarily travelling, and pleasure horses and carriages let out to hire, on that day of the week, which must contribute to such dissipation: to which has been of late added a new device, newspapers sold on this day, usually called "*Sunday Papers*," which must, more or less, have a tendency to dissipate the mind,



mind, and disqualify it for offering acceptable worship to God.

Suffer, therefore, the word of exhortation from one who humbly hopes his love is sincere to all men; and although there may be amongst the counsellors of this nation, those who may say, there is but little in these things that are pointed at, yet, let such remember, the Scriptures declare, “he that contemneth small things, shall fall Eccle. xix. 1. by little and little.” But they are not little things, if they obstruct our being found in the discharge of our duty to our Maker; and will, no doubt, if pursued, ultimately tend to greater evils. O lay these things to heart! ye in whom the executive power is more immediately vested, before it be too late, (by these and other evils being suffered to go on, and the baneful consequences thereof spread,) lest our salt should, more and more, lose its favour, irreligion and infidelity increase, and we be found henceforth, “good for nothing, Mat. v. 13. but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men.” The Almighty may then take from around us his hedge of defence, suffer us to be laid open, as other nations have  
.. been,

been, to the robbers and spoilers, contrary, I believe, to his gracious designs.

Every good work must have a beginning; yet, be it ever so small, as it is suffered to go on progressively, in due time its completion will be effected. That these things may become matters that may claim all due attention, on the part of those, in an especial manner, who should take the lead therein, is what I am favoured, at times, fervently to crave.

THOMAS SHILLITOE.

*Tottenham, Middlesex,  
23d of the 6th Month, 1808.*

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